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News Release

ICE & FBI agents arrest 31 Korean nationals throughout the Northeastern United States in federal human trafficking case

-- Korean women were smuggled to U.S. work as prostitutes in brothels --

NEW YORK, NY -- Michael J. Garcia, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Roslynn R. Mauskopf, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Julie L. Myers, Assistant Secretary, United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Mark J. Mehrson, Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office, today announced that 31 individuals were arrested yesterday and charged in a wide-ranging human trafficking ring operating throughout the Northeastern United States.

The defendants have been charged by the United States Attorneys' Offices for the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York with crimes including conspiracy to engage in human trafficking; conspiracy to engage in interstate transportation of women for the purpose of prostitution and interstate transportation of women for the purpose of prostitution, conspiracy to transport illegal aliens and transportation of illegal aliens; and conspiracy to operate an unlicensed money transmitting business.

The defendants include brothel owners and managers, middlemen who worked as transporters and otherwise assisted the organization, and individuals involved in unlicensed money transmitting businesses. ICE and FBI agents executed arrest warrants and/or search warrants in New York, Washington, D.C., Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maryland, North Carolina, and California.

Investigation launched in 2005

According to complaints unsealed today in Manhattan federal court and in Brooklyn federal court, the investigation began in approximately May 2005, when a Korean couple who owned and operated a chain of Korean brothels in Queens, New York, attempted to bribe an undercover New York City Police Department ("NYPD") detective to protect their businesses from being raided by law enforcement. Working in an undercover capacity, the detective began accepting bribes from the couple.

Between May 2005 and March 2006, the couple paid the undercover detective a total of \$126,500 in cash bribes. On March 8, 2006, the couple and two NYPD officers, who were discovered during the investigation to be accepting bribes, were arrested and charged with public corruption offenses. That prosecution is pending in federal district court in Brooklyn before the Honorable Sandra L. Townes.

The government expanded its investigation and obtained a court-authorized wiretap on the telephone of Tae Hoon Kim, also known as “Tae Won,” the Flushing-based middleman and transporter. The wiretap led to the discovery of an extensive network of Korean-owned brothels, stretching from Rhode Island to Washington, D.C.

Women recruited from Korea, smuggled to U.S:

According to the complaints, the trafficking process typically began when recruiters in Korea and the United States identified women in Korea who wanted to come to the United States, often to make money to support their families in Korea. The recruiters would then arrange for the transportation of the women to North America.

In some cases, the recruiters provided the women with false immigration documents to enable the women to enter the United States illegally. In other instances, the women were taken into the custody of other handlers in Canada or Mexico and then smuggled into the United States.

The complaints allege that, by the time the women arrived in the United States, they had incurred large financial debts, usually in the tens of thousands of dollars, to the recruiters in Korea and other members of the defendants’ organization.

Women put to work at U.S. brothels to pay off smuggling debt:

Middlemen in the United States arranged for the women to be placed in one of the network’s numerous brothels and then transported the women to the brothels. In many cases, the brothels purported to be legal enterprises such as massage parlors, health spas and acupuncture clinics, but in fact generated the vast majority of their revenue through illegal prostitution.

Once the women were delivered to the brothels, they were placed under the supervision and custody of the brothel owner or manager, who frequently took possession of the women’s identification and travel documents, including passports, to restrict the ability of the women to leave.

The complaints charge that the women then begin working in the brothels as prostitutes, typically with their earnings credited against their outstanding debts to the members of the criminal organization. In some instances, the women were threatened or led to believe that if they left the prostitution business before paying off their debts, they would be turned over to United States law enforcement or immigration authorities, or that their families in Korea would be harmed.

Women traded between brothels on East Coast:

The intercepted telephone conversations revealed that the women were routinely traded and exchanged between and among the various brothel owners and managers, sometimes as often as several times per month, until they worked off their original debts to the defendants.

When a new worker was needed, the owner or manager simply placed a call to a middleman or transporter, who located a woman who fit the manager's need and arranged for the transportation of the woman to the new brothel. In addition, the middlemen assisted the brothel owners in sending prostitution proceeds and other funds overseas through unlicensed Korean money transmitters.

United States Attorney **Garcia** stated, "This case is a reminder that large-scale human trafficking occurs every day, right in our own cities and neighborhoods. The United States government is dedicated putting an end to this type of trafficking, and to punishing those who seek to profit from the sexual exploitation of others."

"We will continue to employ all available resources to investigate and prosecute those who would exploit vulnerable women for personal profit," said United States Attorney **Mauskopf**.

"This law enforcement operation successfully shut down an organization that cashed in human dignity for profit and greed," said ICE Assistant Secretary **Myers**. "ICE will continue to aggressively target the means, money and infrastructure of organizations that exploit individuals."

If convicted of the charges, each defendant faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment for the conspiracy charges and up to ten years imprisonment for interstate sex trafficking.

Mr. Garcia and Ms. Mauskopf praised the work of ICE and the FBI, as well as the NYPD, and thanked the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Rhode Island, the District of Connecticut, the Eastern and Middle District of Pennsylvania, the District of Delaware, the District of Maryland, the District of Washington, D.C., the Eastern District of Virginia, the District of Kansas, and the District of Colorado. Mr. Garcia and Ms. Mauskopf added that the investigation is continuing.

Assistant United States Attorneys Elie Honig and Jason P. W. Halperin are in charge of the prosecution in Manhattan. Assistant United States Attorney Pamela Chen and Trial Attorney Solette Magnelli of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division are in charge of the prosecution in Brooklyn.

The charges contained in the Complaints are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities

The Defendants: Brothel Owners / Managers

Kyo Hwa Adler DOB: 3/21/1953

Sun Im An DOB: 1/15/1962

Ji Hyun Bang DOB: 6/2/1976

Aeok Boydston, a/k/a "Big Sister Lillie" DOB: 5/8/1957

Un Sun Brown DOB: 6/27/1950

Eun Sook Chim, DOB: 5/14/55

Kim Chong, a/k/a "Big Sister Lora" DOB: 5/20/1960 or 5/1/1960

Yong Chong, a/k/a "Ra Ra" DOB: 12/16/1968

Sun Daneman DOB: 10/15/1945

Chong Girouard DOB: 8/28/1949

Chun Grandt, a/k/a "Texas Imo" DOB: 2/5/1952

Mi Sun Hayes, DOB: 9/27/1953

An Soon Kim DOB: 8/2/1957

Hyang Ran Kim, a/k/a "Tina" DOB: 6/7/1975

Hyea Kim, a/k/a "Patty Kim" DOB: 1/15/1969 or 1/21/1969

Kyung Hwa Kim DOB: 11/1/1971

Yong Hui Kim DOB: Unknown

Jung Lim, a/k/a "Big Sister Miko" DOB: Unknown

Kum Ok Lowery DOB: 4/23/1953 or 4/28/1953

Myong Moon, a/k/a "Debbie" DOB: 2/19/1960

Tae Young Oh DOB: Unknown

Eun Ja Park DOB: 10/6/1967

Mi Ja Park DOB: 4/19/1965

Sung Su Plourde DOB: 1/22/1952

Seng Hee Ryan DOB: 6/30/1973

Myong Sa DOB: 3/20/1942

Jae Shim DOB: 2/27/1966, 2/27/1968 or 12/13/1960

Hyo Won Smith, a/k/a “Niko” DOB: 12/20/1967

Tae Nam Thompson DOB: 3/26/1950

Chong Weishaupt DOB: 9/30/1953

Tae Young Oh DOB: Unknown

Kyong Polachek, a/k/a Ji-yeon Kim,” “Jennifer” and “Hana” DOB: 3/29/1952

Middlemen/Transporters

Tae Hoon Kim, a/k/a “Tae Won” DOB: 2/15/1967

Lim, Sung Chul, a/k/a “Sung Chul II,” a/k/a “Seong-cheol” and “Cheol-I” DOB: 2/9/1968 or 2/11/1967

Lee, Sung Ho, a/k/a “Seong Ho” DOB: 10/10/1972

Tae Ho Choi, a/k/a “Tae Jun Park” DOB: 12/20/1974

Do Hyup Bae, a/k/a “Do Hyeop” DOB 6/2/1969

Money Transmitters

Byoung Il Son, a/k/a “Mr. Son” DOB: 9/15/1964

Jin Sook Kim Lee DOB: 6/9/1975

Miae Choi-Son DOB: 9/5/64

Jong Tae Park DOB: 2/7/1975

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